HOBART EAST TIMOR COMMITTEE

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Mr Chairman, respected members of this Committee,

I would like to express my appreciation, on behalf of the Hobart East Timor Committee, for the opportunity granted by this Committee to present our concerns on the question of East Timor.

The Hobart East Timor Committee is an organization of people who are deeply troubled by the situation in East Timor. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, political opinions and religious beliefs. The organizations and individuals who support our Committee and make it possible for me to present this statement today also address a diverse collection of important issues. But they are strongly united in their commitment to the principles upon which the United Nations was founded and stress the paramount importance of the role of this Committee in overseeing the decolonization process as it applies to East Timor.

The purpose of this U.N. Committee is to ensure that the East Timorese people are liberated from their colonial bondage. The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples states, in part, that the continued existence of colonialism prevents the development of international economic co-operation, impedes the social, cultural and economic development of dependent peoples and militates against the United Nations ideal of universal peace.

East Timor is still under colonial rule. Its people are still under alien subjugation, domination and exploitation and thus are denied their fundamental human rights. The East Timorese people have the right to self-determination; a right that was wantonly ignored and violated by Indonesia when it invaded East Timor in December, 1975.

Indonesia continues to carry out armed actions against the people of East Timor. The list of its offensives designed to subjugate East Timor makes grim reading: In 1975 "Operation

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Komodo" (Dragon) was launched killing an estimated 50,000 to 80,000 people according to Indonesia's then Foreign Minister, Mr Adam Malik. In 1977 "Operation Seroja" (Lotus) involved 40,000 Indonesian troops and created devastating famine conditions in East Timor. In 1981 "Operation Keamanan" (Security) used East Timorese civilians including old men and young boys in a "human fence" military operation which again brought great hardship and suffering to the East Timorese people. In 1983 "Operation Sapu Bersih" (Clean Sweep) was begun bringing with it more East Timorese deaths as well as a range of other human rights abuses. Currently, the Indonesian military is conducting a new offensive "Operation Kikis" (Elimination).

This summarised account of Indonesian actions in East Timor demonstrates the clear contravention of the provisions of the 1960 declaration on independence for colonial peoples. It would be possible to enumerate many more atrocities and abuses carried out by the Indonesian Government in East Timor but these are already well documented and have been highlighted many times before in this committee room. I need only refer Committee members to the collection of statements presented by petitioners at last year's session of this Committee to illustrate the vast range of documented illegal actions, human rights abuses and contraventions of U.N. principles and international law that Indonesia has perpetrated during its illegal occupation of East Timor.

There can be no doubt that East Timor is a colony and therefore requires the most careful and continued attention by this Committee who's task is to oversee decolonization. Portugal's colonial rule in East Timor was usurped by Indonesia in December, 1975, but Indonesia claims, pathetically, that the East Timorese sought their independence through integration with Indonesia. This ignores the fact that the East Timorese people had declared themselves independent on November 28th, 1975, forgets the fact that Indonesia conducted a massive military invasion, and disregards the absolute sham of the 1976 "Act of Integration". Yet the Indonesian Government expects the international community to believe that the East Timorese have achieved their desire for independence by being forced to become an appendage of

Indonesia.

The Indonesian Government may have been able to deceive its own citizens by way of a censored press and military repression that East Timor has become Indonesia's 27th province but it certainly has not been able to deceive the international community.

Earlier this year, the Hobart East Timor Committee sought responses from all nations with diplomatic representation in Australia as to their position on East Timor and whether they were prepared to support the work of the U.N. in upholding the East Timorese right to self-determination. No nation was prepared to state recognition of Indonesia's claim. Some of the responses were as follows:

From Sweden - "Sweden's support for the principle of self-determination is well-known. In our view that principle was disregarded by Indonesia in its invasion of East Timor in 1975."

From Britain - "Britain has not recognized Indonesia's sovereignty over East Timor."

And from West Germany - "The government of the Federal Republic of Germany has not recognized the integration of East Timor into Indonesia."

These three members of the United Nations have, on the East Timor question, quite explicitly stated they do not recognize Indonesia's claim to have integrated East Timor. Yet, regrettably, they seem unable to express this in the General Assembly, abstaining from voting on this question. Perhaps their reluctance to vote in accordance with their expressed views lies in the fact that all three nations have lucrative agreements with Indonesia for the supply of military equipment to that country - the same country which uses such weapons in its war against the people of East Timor. It would be a useful exercise for all countries in that situation to re-study the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. For, each time nations act in contradiction to their accepted commitments to uphold international law, the power and effectiveness of the U.N. to create a more peaceful world is diminished.

The farcical nature of Indonesia's claims and the way

it has breached the rules of conduct for U.N. members have been exposed. We also need to consider Indonesia's deliberate attempts to obstruct and wilfully disregard the role of the United Nations in respect to East Timor.

Indonesia has said many times that it is working to get the question of East Timor off the agenda. For a member of this Committee to try to circumvent the role of this Committee should be seen as unacceptable. A report appeared in the Indonesian newspaper "Kompas" after this Committee had completed its session on East Timor last year and it quoted Mr Ali Alatas, Indonesia's Ambassador to the U.N. as saying that Indonesia has been attempting to "lay the basis for East Timor to be withdrawn from the General Assembly's agenda." He is also reported as saying that the continued postponement of the issue will be in Indonesia's favour - because it would enhance Indonesia's chances of eliminating the resistance to Indonesian control in East Timor.

Mr Alatas' comments are interesting. Firstly, because he acknowledges the usefulness of the processes of the United Nations in securing Indonesia's aims - ie. a furtherance of the suffering and oppression of the East Timorese people. And secondly, he suggests that the longer the U.N. spends in discussions which Indonesia can ignore, then the better the chances of Indonesia achieving an undisputed colonial role. But - hasn't Indonesia maintained for the past 11 years that the East Timorese are delighted to be part of Indonesia and that the only reason East Timor is closed to the outside world is because it is economically underdeveloped? Why then does Indonesia need time on its side? Obviously, it is in the hope that the desire of the East Timorese people for independence - as manifested by FRETILIN's 11½ years long struggle - can be extinguished.

The East Timorese people continue to reject Indonesia's colonial domination and despite years of torture, murder and repression they remain determined to achieve their liberation from one of the most disgraceful periods of colonial rule in modern times.

There can be no doubt that the people of East Timor have the right to self-determination because it is a fundamental right of all colonial peoples. The East Timorese people are well aware of this right and continue to struggle both within

East Timor to gain their freedom and outside East Timor to gain the support and recognition of the international community for that inalienable right.

This Committee has the profoundly important task of promoting the process of decolonization. It is a task which requires that all avenues of appropriate action to ensure that the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples be actively upheld in respect to East Timor must be pursued.

The United Nations must act - by calling on Indonesia to withdraw its army of occupation so that independent agents acting under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the U.N. can prepare and oversee an act of self-determination as provided for by well-established U.N. procedures. Indonesia must not be party to the carrying out of such an act. It has no legitimate role in East Timor. The future of East Timor is for the East Timorese people themselves to decide without fear or coercion.

In conclusion, East Timor remains a colonised territory. Whilst Portugal remains the legal administering power it is Indonesia - the invading and therefore illegal power - which actually runs a colonial administration. The question of East Timor is completely within the jurisdiction of this Committee - and it is with this Committee that the responsibility for East Timor's future rests. The United Nations can either fulfil its obligations to the East Timorese as a colonised people or it can be a party to the continuance of one of the most despised, repressive and anachronistic colonial regimes in the world today. It is our hope that the United Nations will demonstrate its ability to work vigorously to uphold the rights of the East Timorese people.

Thankyou.

This statement was presented by Sister Mary Philip SSJ on behalf of the Hobart East Timor Committee.

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